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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Memorandum of Conversation

DATE April 21, 1962

Mr. Kohler's Office

9:15 A.M.

SUBJECT: Berlin and Germany

PARTICIPANTS: Foy D. Kohler - Assistant Secretary, EUR
Fritz Erler - SPD Bundestag Member
J.K. Holloway, Jr., - GER

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The White House - Mr. Bundy

EMBASSY BOMB

US AIR MAIL

April 23, 1967

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Mr. Erler called on Mr. Fohler in one of a series of conversations he has been having with American officials this week.

Mr. Erler opened the conversation by saying that he has been surprised by the stories in the American and German papers regarding the alleged American proposals to make concessions to the Soviets on Berlin and Germany. He had understood from the German Foreign Minister that the German Government was "very satisfied with the American position." Before he left Germany it had been agreed that there was no need to have a foreign policy debate in the German Bundestag as the proposed American course was in accordance with Germany's intentions and aims. In view of this Mr. Erler wanted to ask Mr. Kohler what he, Mr. Kohler, thought had happened which had led to this now celebrated "leak" in Bonn about these alleged American plans.

Mr. Kohler said that our information seemed to indicate that there had been "revolt in the CDU" although we did not know precisely what had triggered this revolt. There was, as Mr. Erlinger knew, nothing new in our proposals. We had given the Germans a copy of the working paper which we had handed the Russians six weeks previously in Geneva. All we had been proposing to do was to revise this working paper in the light of the Geneva talks to take account of the language, but not the substance, of Russian proposals. Therefore, we were surprised and somewhat distressed to read that elements of the German Government were unhappy with this proposed US approach and were intimating that the US was prepared to make concessions on Berlin and Germany to the Soviets. This was particularly distressing because not only had no concessions been made on either side, but also because

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74 cc's rec'd in letter.

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the essential element in any US distinction on Berlin and Germany with the Soviets would be the positions of the German Government and German public opinion. The basic American policy toward Germany is the adherence of Germany to the Western Community and its integration into Western Europe. Berlin is only part of this larger policy.

Mr. Erler said that one source of the German misgivings might be the question of the International Access Authority. He himself had two questions; the first on the competence of the Authority, and the second on the composition of it. He recognized that German ground and water access to Berlin was almost exclusively under Communist control and that obviously there would have to be some concession as an inducement to the Communists to place this control under an international authority. It was in the air that he had misgivings about the competence. If it referred only to safety, this, of course, could be taken care of. If it referred to inspection and control of the people and goods moving by air, this would seem to be dangerous. He was not clear about the question of military transport, which, if controlled by an international access authority, would seem to be subject to a diminution of the Occupation status which had been in effect since 1945.

On the composition of the board, Mr. Erler thought it might be better if the Germans, both East and West (including East and West Berlin) be consultants or holders of minor rights rather than be raised to the same level as, for instance, the United States. The placing of the GDR on the same level as the US would be a great victory for the Ulbricht regime.

Mr. Kohler said before he went into detail, he wished to state the problem. The US is prepared to go to war over Berlin or over free access thereto. It is not prepared to go to war over East Berlin, East Germany or the Oder-Neisse line. We are not altogether sure when it comes to the moment that the US does go to war over West Berlin or access, that our allies will be with us. He would ask, in all seriousness, if the Germans would be with us? Mr. Erler replied, in a war over West Berlin there would be no doubt about this. Mr. Kohler went on to explain the extraordinary military measures the US had taken because of Berlin and the disruption which these had caused in the lives of many American citizens. He said that the President, having done these, now is under an obligation to try every means to find a peaceful solution. In the words of Churchill, "We arm to parley." In this regard, our policy was different from that of General deGaulle who would do nothing, but who is only allowed the luxury of that because of the US strength.

Mr. Kohler then said we had been talking now to the Soviets for some months. We had first tried a broad approach in the original Rusk-Gromyko talks. Then, in the Thompson-Gromyko talks, we had narrowed the conversations to access. Then, at Geneva, we had attempted to broaden them again. The results of these talks can best be seen on three planes. The first plane is that there can be no permanent settlement or solution of the German and Berlin problems without reunification. This unacceptable to the Soviets who want us out of Berlin and who wish to confirm

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the partition of Germany. If we are not going to war to effect the reunification of Germany, there is in the immediate future no possibility that progress can be made on this plane.

The second plane is that of the "facts." To the Russians there are two facts; one is the existence of the Soviet zone of occupation (called the GDR) with 20 divisions of Soviet troops and six divisions of GDR troops. The second fact is that East Berlin and its inclusion in the GDR are not considered by the Soviets as negotiable subjects. On our side, the facts are that we are in West Berlin and that we propose to stay there and that we will not have our access to it blocked.

The third plane therefore becomes the acceptance by both sides of these vital facts and an agreement to disagree. Mr. Kohler then explained in detail the American rationale of the working paper which we had given Gromyko which was in effect a plan by which we agreed to disagree. During the explanation of this, Mr. Erler noted his complete agreement with the idea of joint technical commissions of East and West Berlin. He also indicated understanding of the US position on non-transfer of nuclear weapons which he recognized as an American policy of long-standing. Further, he commented that the concept of a non-aggression pact and non-use of force to change the present demarcation lines of Germany were "old hat" and something that the Federal German Government had done essentially already. He also noted that the concept of a continuing forum for discussing German proposals was actually included in the 1958 resolution of the Bundestag.

Mr. Kohler then went on to comment on the International Access Authority. He said we view it as an operating authority which would be run by a general manager, possibly a Swede. We envisioned that this IAA would operate much as the Port of New York Authority does. Mr. Erler asked if the Authority which operates on the autobahn the same way as the Port of New York authority operates on the Holland Tunnel i.e., admitting any one who pays the tolls and meets the safety regulations. Mr. Kohler said that this obviously would be our first position but that we were not sanguine about obtaining it. At Geneva, the Russians had suggested that West Berlin authorities could determine who used the access routes of the Authority. This seemed worth discussing. He also commented that the concept of the IAA was obviously attractive at least in name as the Soviets had attempted to use it for their proposal which was, however, not a true international authority but only a court of appeals.

Mr. Erler then said he wanted to comment on Mr. Kohler's explanation of the proposed modus vivendi. He said he regretted the German leak because it gave the Soviets the idea they could manipulate the allies. He also wished to make clear that he believed that the US could be relied upon to defend Berlin. He would ask, however, if this proposal would not allow for "the creation of new facts" in that it seemed to accept the division of Berlin and the Wall. Mr. Kohler said that

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contrary to general belief, we had spent hours talking to the Russians about All-Berlin proposals. But, the facts unfortunately were that beginning in 1946, the Soviets had gradually detached East Berlin from greater Berlin and that the wall, while a traumatic experience, had really only confirmed a fact of long-standing. Both Mr. Eriar and Mr. Kohler agreed that there had been illusions about All-Berlin which perhaps had been held by both the Americans and Germans and that it was the collapse of these on August 13 which was the basis for the exaggerated reaction. Mr. Kohler and Mr. Eriar also agreed that it had been the fine leadership of Mayor Brandt which had kept the West Berliners from losing either their heads or their spirit over the wall. Mr. Eriar also said that it was this leadership of Mayor Brandt which prevented the SPD from losing votes in general elections of last year. Heretofore every Soviet aggressive move had tended to help the party in power in Germany. The actual gain in SPD votes []

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